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A HOSPITAL GARDEN

By KATHERINE I. ELLISON, R.N.

Boston, Massachusetts

The nurse was disturbed. The young mother with the new little baby had an unaccountable elevation of temperature; the baby was fretful; the young father, nervous; the doctor, grave; and their combined influence was such that the brave serenity and cheerful confidence of the nurse was temporarily affected. This nurse always expected her patients to do well, she expected this young mother with the starry eyes and bronze hair to do well, but her weariness, caused by busy days and wakeful nights, her deep interest in the little family, and the atmosphere of uneasiness, dampened, for the nonce, her usually ardent spirits. She stood at the back window and felt, as she looked down into the disordered back yard of the little hospital, that there were times when life's aspect was grey, indeed. But her sub-conscious mind was so well trained to look for cheer, that, in a few minutes, there flashed into her mind these lines:

In all places, then, and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings
Teaching us, by most persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things.

"There is no connection between flowers and that dreary ash-heap," thought she, then, almost immediately, "why shouldn't there be flowers, there?" Still standing at the window she began to imagine how the yard would look with bushes and vines and plants, instead of ashes and stones and piles of bricks and dirt.

This was one of the ways she used, to keep cheery and helpful. When she could not take a walk, or sleep, or visit or play, because her duty held her, she could think pleasant thoughts and her body as well as her mind was freshened.

Now, this was a very small hospital, and the nurse, instead of eating her meals alone, ate them with the doctor and his family. At lunch that day, the doctor, remarked "It is time to have the ashes hauled out of the back yard."

"I was looking out there this morning," said the nurse, "and wondered if we could not have a garden, there."

"Oh, do let us have a garden," begged the doctor's pretty wife. And that was the way it happened.

The débris was hauled away, which cleared the field for action, and while this was being done, a neighbor looked over the fence, and asked, "Did the Civic League get after you?"

Any one who has ever helped to transform an ash-heap into a garden-spot knows how much thought and discussion and consultation is involved. After weighty deliberation, a border three feet deep, all around the yard, was decided upon.

A hospital, however, "Private" it may be, belongs to a certain extent to every one in the little town, and when it became known that a garden was in way of becoming a reality at the hospital, every well-established garden in town contributed "slips," and bulbs; and the owners of said gardens brought down from their shelves, the old sugar-bowl, jar or whatever held the seeds from last year, and generously divided with the new gardeners.

With each gift of nasturtium or sun-flower seeds, or slips of golden-glow or phlox or iris or valley lilies, came many valuable suggestions. Several hollyhocks were given, with the regret that these flowers never bloomed the year they are transplanted, but they did bloom and that very freely. A basket containing slips of white clematis and columbine was left in the vestibule one evening, and now that white clematis grows all over the fence, and the columbines have been separated several times.

Despite frequent and free donations, however, there were expenses. Garden tools and some flowers that were desired (to be different), had to be bought.

So much enjoyment had been experienced by the planning, miraculous transformation, and spontaneous interest of friends, that to just take the needed money out of one's purse was not to be thought of for a minute, so a "Hot Weather Fund" was devised. When any one complained of the weather, she was fined five cents, and at first the nickles came in right merrily.

Much merriment was occasioned by the persistent demand to have a "bed in the middle of the yard." So universal seemed the desire for this decoration, that one almost felt the right thing had not been said, if a visitor saw the garden and failed to make this comment.

Rain fell so opportunely that the hospital garden obtained a local reputation that threatened the usefulness of the Signal Service.

Do not allow the impression to grow upon you that no untoward incident befell, and that all was easy and delightful; this is a true story.

For instance, the tiny green leaves of the double sun-flowers, when they appeared, looked like weeds to the inexperienced eyes of the

nurse, and forgetting anything had been planted in that spot, she raked them all up. But there were many delightful, instructive and interesting conversations that had the pleasant stimulus of the hospital garden. The new gardeners were invited to inspect old gardens. At one, they found orderly beds, magnificent old trees, and beyond the garden fence the practical and extensive supply grounds, where the seeds were started and the small plants grew large enough for thinning and transplanting. One moralized, here, to the effect that character, too, should be grown in soil deep and rich, having a reserve of strength and confidence which would enable one to meet unexpected and unusual demands. In another garden, the perfect rotation of blooms was explained, the ingenious arrangement of plants admired, and rose bushes seen that were blooming and had bloomed for fifty years in that same garden.

And so, aside from the improved condition of the back yard, the hospital garden gave much pleasure. One pleasant experience followed another, drives, discussions, comparing of notes, every growing thing in any garden almost a personal friend, because of the interest in the one. Later, the new gardeners were also privileged to give away plants and from the first corn-flowers, early in June, until late in October, the patients had vases of flowers in their rooms. These were more enjoyed than orchids, though they were so homely.

And the starry-eyed young mother did get well, and the baby was given the nurse's name.

Go make thy garden as fair as thou wilt
Thou workest never alone
It may be, he whose plot is next to thine
May see, and mend his own.

In a paper by Doctors W. Gilman Thompson and William H. Sheldon, as reported in the *New York State Medical Journal*, the opinion is given that blood pressure is increased by smoking.